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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

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For paragraphs under the word "Ans." the editor is personally responsible.

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QUESTION CXLVII.

If mankind were left to their choice, would they not reverse the order of punishment and reward by remaining in this world 1,000 *or* 1,500 *years, taking therein their Karmic punishment, and limiting their rewards and happiness (illusory and semi-conscious dreams) in Devachan to three score and ten?*

Ans.—As a Question this has not great moment, because, besides being purely speculative, it is quite unpractical. The existing system will continue, no matter how much we might wish to reverse it.

But it is not even correctly stated. We do not have only punishment in this world, rewards and happiness being confined to Devachan. Karma operates here in the way of recompense no less than of discipline. Nor is Devachan a scene of semi-consciousness; rather, one would say, of a consciousness the fuller because unhampered by fleshly conditions.

Doubtless the Questioner means to ask, Would not most

men prefer a thousand years of earth-life, such as it is, and seventy years of Devachan, such as it is, to the converse figures as they now exist? It is by no means sure that they would. There are several things to be remembered. One is that most lives terminate before the period of advanced old age, and consequently with desires or passions or interests still unsatisfied. The very old, however, from whom these have disappeared, are usually ready to go. We may therefore infer that, if we were 80 or 90, we should feel likewise, and certainly not wish 900 more years before the change. The only way to make this even tolerable would be to extend all other human life to that limit, and thus preserve contemporary interests and friends. Otherwise there would be unspeakable misery, as in the story of the Wandering Jew. But from such experience of earthly life as we have had, is there one of us who would wish such prolongation? To even the happiest and the least afflicted, ten centuries of that kind of happiness wonld seem wearisome; and to most men, with anxieties and drawbacks and labors from which no mere extension of years would free them, protracted longevity would mean a burden greater than they could bear. They might not wish to shorten their actual career, but certainly would not voluntarily so lengthen it.

Another thing is that the attractions of earth-life cannot indefinitely be maintained. Physical bodies, no matter how healthy, confine us within narrow limits of experience, and few people would wish a thousand years of such when even sixty are often irksome. This would be all the more certain as longevity brought with it larger intelligence and knowledge. The body, as the great check to movement on higher planes, would be disliked and then detested, and every succeeding decade would broaden the horizon of desired experience, without abating the hindrance to the quest of it. By and by this would become intolerable. And though it is true that all such mental process cannot be realized in advance, enough can be foreseen to cancel a disposition to centuries of corporeality.

Another thing is that the greatest incentive to life—the dread of death—is largely the creation of certain religious beliefs which are now decaying. As they continue to decay,

two sequences will occur: the imaginary terrors caused by a false creed will disappear, and the nature and function of death, whether treated simply as the transit to the next higher stage of evolution, or illuminated with the fuller truth now spreading through the world, will be understood with cheerful, trustful mind. The present attitude towards death in Christian lands must be temporary, and longevity need not be the remedy for that which will in time cease to appear an evil.

But even if the Christian view of death was universal through humanity, and if existence here contained far greater possibilities than it does, and if most men were so infatuated with life that they preferred to extend it twenty-fold, it still wonld not follow, as the Question implies, that their preference would be wise. Sound choice presupposes both large information and a trained judiciousness, which are exactly the things that the masses do not possess. They do not possess them in the ordinary affairs of life.—civil government, for example; much less in the broader field of human evolution and the best aids to it. The larger, therefore, the area from which the verdict was drawn, the greater the proportion of men incompetent to give any, and so (this not being a matter of instinct but of judgment) the less valuable the verdict.

The FORUM consequently thinks that a consensus of human opinion in favor of reversing the respective figures is very doubtful, and that, even if it was assured, it would have little worth.

QUESTION CXLVIII.

If every man must work out his own salvation through Karmic law, is not all charity, public and private, as well as all punishment, public and private, alike an interference with the decrees of Karma?

Ans.—FORUM No. 20 has under Question XCIX some thoughts on the matter of punishment which bear on the present Question and should be read. The latter is evidently based on some such idea of Karma as this,—that it is a disciplinary force which has in view the reformation of character through experience of the pain consequent on transgression;

hence that it is a separate force working separately on each individual and ensuring to him of itself the exact amount of discipline needed; so that, if any one relieves pain or inflicts it, he is unsettling the process, in the former case by diminishing, in the latter case by increasing, the normal adjudication; and therefore that all such action must be not only impertinent but mischievous.

All through this conception is a mixture of fact and mistake. It is true that Karma is disciplinary, and that it is exact; but not true that it is only disciplinary, or that individuals are isolated from each other as to it, or that human charity and human punishment are no part of it, or that it is a force which works without conscious beings as its media.

Let us start with the definition of Karma as the *law of cause and effect.* As there are causes on every plane of being, there must be effects on every plane, so that Karma rules on all planes. As effects do not emerge from causes in only one line, but rather as radii, they must reach and affect all surrounding objects. As a man is composed of constituents appertaining to several planes, he is constantly and simultaneously producing causes and therefore effects on those planes. Adding together these postulates, we see that a man ceaselessly sets in motion forces in different regions (physical, mental, psychic, moral, and spiritual) which produce results on the persons and things circumjacent, and that Karma is the law of them.

But action involves re-action. This, too, is true of all planes and of all beings on them. And from it follows the consequence that a man generating divers forces on divers planes upon divers objects will receive back again divers forces on divers planes from divers objects.

Now turn from the abstract to the concrete. This composite being, man, does many things of various qualities, some good, some bad, some purely physical, some intellectual, some moral, but all of them having a ramifying influence, all of them affecting his neighbors, and all of them with an assured rebound. How is it possible, then, to say that his neighbors have nothing to do with him, that his receiving charity may not be the result of his having himself been charitable, that his receiving punish-

ment may not be the fitting consequence of his having been aggressive, that these very experiences, solacing or punitive, are not Karmic and through Karmic agencies?

Such, in truth, they are. And the more rigorously the doctrine of Karma is pushed, the more certain this must be. If a man receives and *can* receive nothing but his due, this must be true of any charity extended to him or of any punishment. Each is an effect of some precedent cause. And even the more temperate view, which allows for qualifications due to complexities in terrestrial workings, still affirms as above, adding the qualifications consequent. For it holds that the inter-play of social forces calls for many actions by individual men which are proper for their own development in kindness and justice, and proper for the sweetening and the conservation of society. We are not mere machines, functioning as necessity or duty prescribes, but have sentiments which need expansion through exercise.

The supposition that acts of a Karmic character are an "interference" with Karma implies that Karma is a law which enforces itself wholly through some mechanism outside of humanity, and that it does not work through human agencies. But this is a serious error. It is hardly conceivable that in a complicated world of Karma-making men all Karmic discipline should come from sickness or storms or physical powers beyond the range of human influence. Really probable is the opposite supposition, *i. e.*, that actions bearing on other men should receive their consequences largely from those men. This would be the case in a general sense, but specifically in legal punishment for crime and in that social odium which is retribution for socal offense short of criminal. And, in fact, whenever we see a man put in jail for assault or sent to Coventry for misconduct we are seeing a distinct manifestation of Karma, a manifestation even more distinct, indeed, than loss of property or health, for in the latter case there is no visible connection between the suffering and the wrong, especially as the wrong may have been committed in a previous incarnation, whereas in the former the connection is palpable. And thus the punishment of men by other men, so far from being an "interference" with Karma,

is really the normal effectuation of it, an inherent part of the system, essential to its workings, contemplated from the beginning.

Like considerations illuminate the matter of charity. Physical suffering, unless brought about by the sufferer's heedlessness (as in penury from extravagance), or by his wilful outrage on others (as in a robbery forcibly repelled), may furnish proper opportunity for the recompense of a previous deed of charity by the present sufferer. And it is quite permissible to suppose—outside of the two cases cited—that the suffering may already have been adequate to the offense, or that volunteered kindness may arouse emotion more effectual to reform than a continuance of pain, or that a crisis has been reached when other influences can operate if only the hindrance to them is removed. In any one of these conditions charity would be coöperation with Karma, not interference with it.

Strenuous adherence to all the foregoing does not deny the possibility of interference with Karma. The subject is too large for present treatment, but it may be said that failure to inflict or to continue deserved punishment would be an illustration. A culprit, for instance, escaping arrest through laziness or good-nature, or a convict pardoned out of jail because his health was poor or his wife was in tears or the Governor was pliable, or a politician allowed high office after being shown unworthy of it,—all are interferences with Justice and are reprehensible. They also create Karma in those interfering, and thus expand the area of trouble. This is one reason why thoughtful Theosophists do not look with favor on the merely sentimental view of Fraternity, for they see that one-sidedness, a one-sidedness which ignores the most essential quality in the whole sphere of social and individual evolution—Justice, must of necessity excite more evil than good. The tender heart should be conjoined with the clear head, or there will be maudlinness and weakness and a whole series of follies over which the rational will become impatient and the philanthropic troubled. All of which goes to show, once more, how needful is that symmetrical evolution which is recommended by meditation and illustrated by Masters.

[It may not be amiss to state that 5 papers by the present

writer, treating of Karma from as many points of view and entitled "Topics in Karma", will be printed together by the T. P. S. as No. 15, Vol. IV, of *Theosophical Siftings*. They discuss more fully matters for which the FORUM has too little space.—ED.]

QUESTION CXLIX.

If all sinning or wrong-doing is from ignorance,—ignorance of the better way, how far is it just to punish such ignorance?

Ans.—In jurisprudence it is a maxim that "Ignorance of the law excuses no man", it being held that a man is bound to acquaint himself with laws passed to govern him, and also that the admission of ignorance as excuse would practically vitiate all law. But in the unwritten moral code one cannot go so far. There are, indeed, certain broad and indispensable principles of conduct, recognized instinctively by the moral sense, and binding on all men, though even here there are difficulties both historical and logical. Perhaps the only sure ground is that they were originally implanted in humanity by the Creator, and that their later decay or perversion is by fault of the individual, who cannot therefore plead the consequences of a former fault as a defense for a subsequent.

Further, a distinction is to be made between an error of judgment and a violation of conscience. If a man has no information of, no prompting to, the better of two ways, he is in the situation of a traveller at a forked road, ignorant of both branches. He may be blameless if he takes the wrong one. Yet even here, if that one leads to a morass he has to retrace wearily his steps, not as a punishment, but as the necessary condition to reaching the right one. So a painful experience is often the consequence of an innocent error, not only in morals but in the concerns of ordinary life. If an investor loses on a security, we do not fault him, but his money has gone all the same. In the case of violation of conscience the case is very different, though even here arises the difficult question of the accuracy of conscience as a moral guide, unenlightened conscience sometimes leading to crime, as in religious persecution.

This subject is too large for proper handling in the FORUM. Respecting the general question of discipline for wrong done in ignorance, the nearest approach to truth may be in these four propositions:—

1st. That security to the rights of all other persons requires the punishment of wrong-doers, irrespective of motive.

2d. That there are few cases where deliberate wrong is done in entire ignorance of its quality.

3d. That there is no other way to force knowledge home than by experience of the evil effects of evil deeds.

4th. That one of the three objects of punishment being the reformation of the offender, his ultimate good is really promoted even through his pain.

QUESTION CL.

Can you give a plain, clear definition of the term "Logos", and in what sense Christ was the "Word made flesh"?

J. D. B.—The "Logoi" refer to degrees according to manifestation, and the numbers "first", "second", "third", &c., refer to the *manifestation*, for there is but *one Logos*, and all others are "reflections". This *One*, invisible, incomprehensible Logos never reveals itself, but *reflects* itself through a "veil". The veil of the unmanifested Logos is Buddhi, and this Buddhi, or veil, both concealing and reflecting the Logos, is the Augœides of the Greeks. In the Secret Doctrine, therefore, the real, unmanifested Logos and Atman are the same. This subject may be found treated of in the *Lectures on the Bhagavad-Gítá* by T. Subba Row, and in the first vol. of the *Secret Doctrine*. Christ was the "Word", or Logos, by virtue of the complete union of the Atman, Buddhi, and Manas in him. These three were one in his conscious life. In other words, he was an Initiate, or Adept, through this "union with the Father", "father" meaning Atman. This is the "Holy Trinity" so generally misunderstood, and both the idea and the form of expression were derived from the Secret Doctrine. The words used were Greek, and the whole subject antedates the year One of our Era by thousands of millenniums.

QUESTION CLI.

Do the Adepts ever visit and control so-called mediums, in the same manner as disembodied spirits, either using their voices to speak or impressing them with their thoughts?

Ans.—It must ever be presumptuous and unsafe to lay down inflexible rules, and particularly so as to the action of beings on a far higher grade of development, with whose purposes and methods one cannot be familiar. But it is permissible to speculate from a foothold of probabilities.

The ordinary "medium" would seem a most unlikely tool for Adept use. It is well known that mediums are usually persons of disordered physique and ill-balanced minds, and that a large proportion are not in moral good-health. There is everything in their habits and their profession to divert from normal functions of body and mind, and not a little to dull the moral sense. The magnetic state of a typical medium must be in antipodal contrast with that of an Adept, and there would seem to be nothing in vibration or in aura which would furnish suitable conditions for his employment as an instrument. If no intelligent reception and reproduction of thought was contemplated, nothing more than a mechanical utterance by physical organs while the ego was in abeyance, some more congenial channel would seem probable.

The recorded utterances of mediums do not indicate Adept origin. An enormous proportion are trivial or common-place, few rising near the plane of fine intelligence, and perhaps none attaining it. The contents of any Spiritualistic journal will illustrate this, and probably there is no sarcasm on popular intellect more keen than the fact that a number of periodicals actually live and thrive through the weekly production of the flimsiest and most worthless *banalitès*. If conversations in the "summer land" are as insipid as the discourses which are supposed to trickle from it, any shrinking from death and the hereafter is amply warranted. One of the most amazing features of Spiritualism is its assurance of the contentment of intelligent spirits with an environment of ungrammatical babble, to say nothing of the continued cheer of Pythagoras and Plato after

centuries of surrounding nonsense which on earth would have driven them wild in a day. Until some choice expression of unearthly wisdom, some rich contribution to knowledge, emanates from the mouth of a medium, it is fair to suppose that he is voicing thought from a much lower plane than the Adept's.

There is another consideration, not final but having force. We know that the Masters consider the Theosophical Society as in fact the great agency by which enlightenment of this age is to be brought about. Whatever may be its imperfections, it is the *only* organization occupied in pressing home to men's minds the great truths of Karma, Reïncarnation, and a possible spiritual ascent. And we know also that the Theosophical Society, both in its teachings and its work, has no more bitter opponents than Spiritualism, its magazines and its mediums. While, therefore, one cannot say that an Adept never would employ a medium as a channel of communication, and while one would not say that no channel outside the T. S. is ever selected, there would certainly be an incongruity in the use of an avowed enemy as a messenger to friends.

Though it is necessary to repudiate any claim to define the possible action of Adepts, there may very properly be stated the presumption against the belief that in Their work They could find either congenial or useful a class of instruments apparently unfit for it, which They have apparently not used hitherto, and which is in sharp hostility to Them and Their friends.

QUESTION CLII.

What is the effect of insanity on the relationship of the Higher to the lower Ego?

Jno.—In the consideration of such a matter it is of the utmost importance to know what degree of insanity we are to deal with. In the case of an ordinary imbecile the effect cannot be as far-reaching as in that of a raving madman.

In order to give a clear idea it will be necessary to go through a summary of esoteric philosophy concerning the relationship of the Higher Ego to the lower personality. We are

told that the Higher Ego is an entity from a past Manvantara that had not accumulated sufficient knowledge of the physical plane of consciousness or exhausted its Karma when its world went into Pralaya, and that in this Manvantara it has thrown out a "feeler"—a reflection of itself—in this realm of illusion, to accomplish those objects. The lower personality is that "feeler", and the Manasic entity is the God overshadowing it. The Higher Ego is, then, the Manasa-Putra, the immortal part, lasting from earth-life to earth-life, and its presence in the terrestrial Ego is the feeling of I-am-ness that remains forever the same from youth to old age. Our physical bodies are not the identical ones we had when children, nor will they be the same when gray hairs usurp the place of black. All is changing save this feeling of I-am-ness—of continued individuality—which whispers to man of his immortal destiny.

But it must not be presumed that the occultists believe in the immortality of *personalities*. Out of the surging masses of mankind, how few lives are fit even for *remembrance* in coming ages! Theosophy teaches that all the thoughts, inclinations, and qualities of a purely earthly nature perish with the body. Nought can cling to the immortal Triad but that which by its very nature ascends into the realm of spirit. That which is weighed down by its grossness becomes embedded in the Kama-rûpa, the dissolving spook. Look over the "rank and file", sum up the thoughts of the representative one, and how much do you find fit for immortality?

Then, in the case of a mild lunatic, about as much would adhere to the Higher Ego as in that of a debased sensualist or inebriate. The laborer had neglected to till the soil, and the crop was principally weeds. Certain experiences were necessary to be gained; the "feeler" failed to gain them, and so the undertaking must be gone over again.

Should a child become hopelessly insane before its seventh year—the time when the Higher Manas becomes united to it—and remain so until death, nothing could be saved from the wreck. The Manas Ego can only gain cognizance of the physical plane through the physical person, hence no Devachan can take place, but a new series of incarnations must be commenced.

The Master must send forth another laborer. Of course, during times of lucidity the Higher Ego is enabled to be a gainer from the incarnation, but during loss of mental equilibrium there must be an obscuration of the material plane, and the eclipse must continue till the return of rationality, though the Higher Ego will be fully conscious and act on its own plane of being, irrespective of the lower man, as it does when the latter is asleep.

The apparent injustice of the foregoing is removed by the fact that insanity is invariably a matter of Karma, but this problem is intricate and need not be dwelt upon here.

One phase of the question is obsession, for a great proportion of the world's insanity is nothing but that. The medical fraternity long ago shut its eyes to this point, and until they are opened it will remain blind regarding the cause and method of treatment of a large percentage of insane patients. The Christian pooh-poohing at what his sacred writ teaches from cover to cover is but one of the glaring inconsistencies of this paradoxical nineteenth century.

H. P. B. says in *Isis* that "we elbow soulless people in every walk of life," and it seems logical to conclude that nurses in hospitals for the insane do not a little of that sort of elbowing, for the madman is as a broken instrument from which the Master can bring forth no melody, and—discards.

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